

Beauty and the Beast

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BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

by Regina McBride

My father's face was a lion's face
with magnificent red hair.
The fillings in his teeth were jewels
flowing with sexual currents.

In the room of living furniture
he kept me:
The Centerpiece.
The Secret Keeper.

I remember an illustration
of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux,
dying like a good girl at twenty four,
a ribbon of blood

spilling from the corner of her mouth.
Fidelity to silence
ecstatic veils weaving
around her head

powers that gave her the gift of Consumption.
Older nuns attended her bed
changing the blood stained sheets,
envious of her honeymoon with Christ.

* * * *

It was with a feeling of black-out
I learned to latch on my dog mask
and stand in the doorway, half human.
It was with a discordant bell

I kept him out.
Mistress to a pack of dogs,
barking oracles.
Bitch Guardian with a black curling lip.